

Date 10 / 5 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / Lyric

Title "A Word on Statistics"

Author / Director / Wisława Szymborska

Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

"A Word on Statistics" was given to the entire English 2XL class to read and discuss with classmates by Mr. Shakely. It was required homework to do a poetic vision log on the poem.

Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc?)

"A Word on Statistics" discusses various attributes or characteristics that would define portions of a group of people. In this case, it makes generalizations, based on the author's experience, about a group of a hundred people. Because one hundred is used to address the topic, it can be inferred that the author is referencing the percentages of the human population as a whole. The poem, for the most part, mentions two types of traits: those that are good and those that are evil.

Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

"A Word on Statistics" analyzes the nature of human nature, as it tries to illustrate the core qualities both inherent in humans and those that are quite rare. Those characteristics or behaviors that seem natural and that most people are inclined to engage in are generally evil, suggesting that humans are malevolent and bad creatures. The poem also mentions the good attributes or behaviors that can be found in humans, however, with much less successful results. The numbers, out of one hundred, that describe people who are genuinely kind-hearted and benevolent are indeed insignificant. These behaviors take energy and effort because they are unnatural, and only a minute proportion of the population is willing to take them on. Unfortunately, these numbers seem to even be constantly declining.

Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

Each sentence/ characteristic describing humanity in this poem is in its own little stanza, and the poem is arranged in two columns, placing emphasis on and distinction between all of the qualities. There are no complete sentences; rather, there is an attribute generally followed by a colon and the number of people that fulfill the attribute. This makes the poem abrupt but straightforward, for the most part. Also, quite interestingly, depending how a person interprets the numbers being used, the figures add up to about 777, the holy number of completion. This may just be a fluke, but it was worth discovering.

Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections / Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

I partially enjoyed a "Word on Statistics," mostly because the numbers that the author used to evaluate humans, though realistic, seemed too subjective, especially because the information required to make these assumptions is unattainable. The poem leaves me wondering how anyone can ever accurately come up with these generalizations, no matter how old or wise, and it tempts me to question the credibility of the author. Nevertheless, one line that stood out significantly was the last line of the poem: "Mortal; / one hundred out of one hundred— / a figure that has never varied yet" (1). This line obviously suggests that humans will forever be humans, but it also seems to mean that this is the only number throughout the entire poem that is actually stagnant. All of the other numbers are constantly changing, and not for the better. I made a connection between this and the fall of man evident in *Epic*, as John Eldredge states, "Most of the misery we suffer on this planet is the fruit of the human heart gone bad" (57). The poem references high numbers of indecent qualities, and consequently high numbers of suffering. These numbers appear to be growing. The poem was somewhat poetic, but not to the greatest extent, probably because I found it to be a little bit too basic and concrete. It was poetic in the sense that it portrayed the opinions of a very wise woman, who now views the world and all of its complex aspects in hindsight because she has faced a greater chunk of time on earth. The knowledge and insight of an elderly person is so genuine, immense, and even poetic, for he or she knows more than anyone can ever attempt at trying to understand. Statistics, too, can be poetic, as they are foundational structures on which people can always rely and count on; nevertheless, these statistics didn't seem to be one hundred percent credible.

over (do not mix logs; e.g., no poem log in front, and movie log on back)